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Speech of the President of the M.E.P. Mr. G.F. Croes.

Brother Members of fraternal parties, Brother Members of our Parties, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that on this historical day I welcome all of you. I wish to address special words of welcome to the members who have come from abroad, since for the majority of them this is the first contact they are having with our beautiful island of Aruba.

To-day is the 18th of March of 1981, the day we are celebrating the first five years of the initiation of our anthem and our flag, the first two symbols of the identity of our people and of our great desire for independence. Furthermore we are commemorating another historical landmark, that is the second five years of our party that took place on the 9th of February, these are memorable events and these two together with having obtained the membership of the International Socialista as a consultative member were the reasons why we decided to organize an International Congress.

This Congress is characterized by three main principles which are absolutely and inalienably united to colonial people, that is to say decolonialization, self-determination and liberty.

From the thirties on our people have been in a period of development aimed at the obtention of our liberty that is to say independence.

Since our people considered that decolonialization and self-determination are two parameters of freedom. It is an absolutely unique fact to note that so many brothers from fraternal parties have accepted the invitation to express our solidarity together in a broad discussion with people that are still under the colonial yoke. In particular in these regions where there are still colonies that vary from "Departement d'outre mer" up to 'Common Wealths'. For our people in particular, this Congress will be a great encouragement to continue the path that was chosen until independence has been achieved.

I shall start an explanation of this problem. Further on my fellow members of the party will go into more details of the same subject. I would like to start with the Netherlands Antilles, in particular with the process of development at which Aruba is to be found in regard to the other islands of the Netherlands Antilles and Holland. From the 15th of December of 1954 we have in force for the parts that compose the Kingdom of the Netherlands Holland and the six islands of the Netherlands Antilles a statute of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Furthermore we have in force for six islands of the Netherlands Antilles, the constitution of the Netherlands Antilles, established by the Statutes.

Thru this a basis was established for a state union of the

six islands, which all together cover a surface of more or less 1.000 square kilometers and a number of inhabitants that is more or less 250.000 in number. This group of islands can be divided into two sub-groups, the Leeward Islands and the Windward Islands, forming the leeward we have Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao. Aruba is at a distance of 60 kilometers from Curacao and 30 kilometers from the Venezuelan coast. The other group of islands is the Dutch part of St. Martin, St. Eustatius and Saba. These islands are the Windward Islands are almost 900 kilometers to the north, among the old Windward Islands of Great-Britain.

Observing the geographic distances between the Windward and Leeward Islands, as well as the differences in language, culture and historic reference picture, we can apply to the whole group the thesis that "Islands are Islands".

Attempt to impose upon them a state structure is a lost case from beforehand. Thus the Island Territory of Aruba experimented the Statutes as the Constitution based on which, as species of oppression from above on the will of the people of Aruba in their desire for Freedom.

Even though theoretically they are a state of unit, this so-called union really is strumbling on its foundation.

We can go very far back in time to understand the evolution of the thought and action of the Aruban people and their political leaders. During the thirties of this century we started to see the first symptoms of the desire of the people of Aruba for liberty. Even Holland started to understand that we could not keep the islands together in an artificial way and against their own will. The feeling of reality was shown when Queen Wilhelmina declared during the war years of 1940 to 1945 that at the end of the war a new arrangement would be made, in which the autonomy of each colony separately will have to be expressed as much as possible.

Aruba interpreted this declaration of principles as a recognition of right to self-determination of each people of each island of the Netherlands Antilles.

The Higher Legislative Body, that is to say the Parliament of the Netherlands Antilles, demonstrated an attitude of having adapted itself to the altered circumstances in the thoughts and action of the people and the political leaders of one of its components, that is to say Aruba. The Parliament several times declared that it recognized the right of self-determination of the parts that compose the Dutch Antilles, stating: "Each people of each island has the inalienably right to determine its own future. In view of this right they may determine their political, economic, social and cultural future."

This motion was repeated several times and was approved several times.

In this sense I would like to observe at this time that all together it was only in 1979 and after great pressure from Aruba, that is to say from the M.E.P., this declaration started to become a reality. In a dialogue with the other islands of the Netherlands Antilles, the Government of the Netherlands Antilles and Holland recognized the rights of the Aruban people thru the Kingdom's Committee, set up with the view to analyzing the desires from the point of view of state territory of the different islands and the Round Table Conference that arose therefrom at which the above-mentioned participated as a whole, they finally understood that Aruba desired to become an independent state coupled to the closest possible cooperation and according to international laws with the other islands which at the moment are being called the Dutch Antilles.

A link of institutionalized cooperation which could be the precursor of links of cooperation among more islands of the Caribbean area. With other countries of the region which we wish to establish a special type of collaboration.

The links of institutionalized cooperation which might be the first step of an institutionalized cooperation among more and more islands of the Caribbean region. This then would be stressed because Aruba even though it desires its independence we understand that it is necessary for many reasons and for the maintenance of territory integrity and the political independence it is also necessary to think big.

You may be able to see that as of the first declaration of the State of the Netherlands Antilles in 1947 very little has been progressed in regard to the implementation of the right of self-determination by the different insular territories during this intermediate period.

The main cause therefore could be considered a lack of political will, both from Holland as well as from older politicians of the Netherlands Antilles.

An interruption; the First Minister of the Netherlands Antilles has just arrived, Mr. Don Martina. (Applause).

In the present constellation Curacao has 12 seats, Aruba 8, Bonaire 1, St. Martin, Saba, St. Eustatius the three together 1 seat, adding up to a total of 22 seats in the Central Parliament.

Just one island, the largest Curacao, has the absolute majority. This division of seats has caused frustrations and has prevented the implementation of the right to self-determination of Aruba.

It was that difference that served to catalyze the foundation of our social-democratic party, the M.E.P. Other reasons were on one hand to separate us from the traditionally conservative parties of formerly and on the other hand to carry out the desire of the Aruban people in a dynamic way. In other words, ever since its foundation the M.E.P. has always expressed itself as the party of and for the people.

When our party was founded on the 9th of February of 1971, our party established for itself the firm purpose in its program of principles of reforming the political constellation and to struggle for the liberty of our people.

During the elections of 1971, two months after its foundation we obtained 33% of the votes of the Electoral Body. With this the Parliamentary struggle started in the opposition and it continued using the most important subject which is THE FREEDOM OR LIBERTY OF ARUBA.

After two years in 1973, we obtained an absolute majority in the people of Aruba, with the Independence of Aruba on the platform.

With the victory at one single election we have not yet been able to achieve Independence. And, much less so, when we need the cooperation in the Central Parliament of the Netherlands Antilles and Holland.

It is true that in the Central Parliament we have approved a motion recognizing the right to self-determination for each people of each island, nevertheless to have the right to self-determination and to really achieve it are two things completely apart.

Above all when it is a matter of a metropolis which at the time was hindering the progress.

As an example I could mention, for our brother Carlos Gallardo from Guatemala it may be interesting to hear this and to understand this example.

When the people of Aruba voted for their Independence in a Referendum in 1977, 83% of the voters voted for Independence. At that time the metropolis mobilized the diplomatic corps to inform different countries stating that the people of Aruba and Aruba were just a very small fraction of the Netherlands Antilles.

At that time Holland received a letter from the Foreign Affairs office of Guatemala stating Holland the Government of Guatemala is ready to stop recognizing the right to self-determination of Aruba but we do demand that Holland stop recognizing the right to self-determination of the people of Belize That is what is called bargaining with the fundamental rights of human beings. The fundamental rights of the people. But to-day it is very pleasant to

be able to note that Guatemala recognizes the right to self-determination of the people of Belize.

At that time we then started an international attack, one might say. Visiting different countries and different organizations in the region we have attempted to obtain attention for the idea of our Independence.

A delegation of Aruba visited among others Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, the United States and the Organization of American States. And the Commission of the United Nations for the Committee of the 24, which is the Committee for Decolonization.

Due to the positive attitude of our neighbors and our region as a whole, as well as the negative reaction in the Antillian Constellation and in the relationship with Holland, the M.E.P. decided in 1975 once again to establish the Independence of Aruba as an objective of the elections and even with greater strength than formerly.

When the M.E.P. won the elections with 60% of the valid votes, once again it was seen that our party the M.E.P. had evaluated the situation correctly.

Over and again we have realized that we need support and the international solidarity to achieve our ideal and hence we have used all the means that we had at our disposal.

On the 18th of March of 1976 therefore, the date that we are commemorating to-day, the first foundations for this ideal were set down by means of the inauguration of the flag and anthem of Aruba. This day, the 18th of March, has become a national holiday for Aruba.

Nevertheless, the apotheosis of the path chosen by the M.E.P. was the popular referendum that I mentioned before, which took place in 1977, thru which the people supported the policy of the M.E.P. overwhelmingly, 83% of the voters were in favor of Independence. A solidarity that to-day has given rise to the first concrete steps for the obtention of said Independence.

Nevertheless it was not enough in the concept of the Metropolis. The trade unions, our party and the people as a whole, had to cause with revolutionary operations and strikes a semi-chaotic situation forcing Holland thus to recognize the legitimate struggle of our people. And from then on Holland, the Government of the Antilles and all the islands agreed to study the constitutional changes bearing in mind the Independence of Aruba.

Just a short while ago we carried out a Round Table Conference in The Hague and another one will be held very soon.

Brothers I would like to assure you, firmly convinced, that our party does not bargain with the fundamental rights of the human being. The perseverance that our people have shown for over 50 years and the resistance it has displayed still in the face of economic threats, is for us the guarantee of the achievement of our purpose.

Not only since its foundation trade unions have been behind the birthplace of the birth of our party, but the examples that I have just given you demonstrate that our movement will always be "forward" with the support of the mass of the people.

The most outstanding examples are the actions regarding the revolutionary situations of 1977 that I mentioned before.

This collaboration between our party and the trade unions as representatives of the working class, guaranteed the support of a broad strata of the population.

This in no way was a simple task since the Aruban society was constituted of 60 different nationalities, a fact that has always been stressed by other parties, without doing anything to integrate these groups of population. Thus it is with pride that we can state that the M.E.P. was the first to be able to group together representatives of this heterogeneous society into one single party. Up to to-day we can refer to this very unique success. The composition of the Council of the Party, the Legislative Council, the Parliament of the Netherlands Antilles and the Executive Council of Aruba are examples of this. But the best example is above all the harmonious society that we have created in Aruba and which can serve, I am sure, as an example for many countries.

The success of Aruba in its social achievements has been that the measures have been balanced, thus creating an evolutionary process that has been gradual and in keeping with our economic development.

It would take too much time to talk about all the social things that have been achieved and done by our Government. As you all know the M.E.P. has at this time the absolute majority, also in the Insular Government and three parties in the opposition that have more or less as a whole 40% of the electoral mass.

Nevertheless, if I am asked whether there exists social justice in our people unfortunately I must admit that we do not have it, at least not in a sufficient degree. This is not the ideal situation we are trying to achieve. On

the basis of what I have just said the aide and the hand of the brother parties is indispensable in order to be able to implement Independence as well as to be able to implement the fundamental principles of the social democracy.

It is necessary to have the solidarity of those who have our same opinion. Nevertheless the option for the social democratic ideology does not have the meaning of dogmatic approximation of our social problems. This option, in our opinion, is to express our implication in the existing needs of the people of the islands of the Caribbean in general terms and also of the other Netherlands Antilles and especially Aruba.

An option or alternative for this ideology requires an adaptation in the carrying out of the fundamental social democratic principles. In other words, it implies a need for flexibility and to anticipate the present and future needs. Only by means of this sense of reality and a vision towards the future will it be possible to adequately solve the problems we have to face.

That is why the struggle for Independence of many micro states in the Caribbean area throughout the sixties and the seventies, has been a good school for all of us, even though it has been different from the ideological standpoint this experience is a great aide for all of us in order to have a clear image of the structure of the need we have to face and on the other hand of the state constellation that finally has been achieved.

The final result we have been able to attain indicates that the thesis of a vacuum was exact, in other words there is a dependence relationship that has to be solved. This vacuum, and I want to emphasize this, should not be determinant in order to make decisions that perhaps would not be adequate.

Even though if we make preference to other links of cooperation in the Caribbean area that previously have been a failure, we must not think that all the future links will give the same results.

It is my opinion that cooperation links based on the international rights will be successful. And this could even lead us to the Constitution of the Caribbean Parliament.

But we do have to bear in mind that in this form of cooperation there will be no place for an exercise of power. On the basis of good will and mutual respect but especially with a very clear sense of reality, it is necessary to establish common points with regard to mutual needs regarding different aspects; the philosophy at the basis of this effort should be that of integration, it should be a combination of strength in order to resist common problems that

we have to face and that come from abroad, the extreme left that is communism and the extreme right, facism, are our common enemies. On the basis of this definition and option for the social democratic ideology means really to establish a balance between different situations of dependence but also it should be an excellent guarantee to repel anti-democratic elements within our societies.

This requires a very close cooperation or a demonstration of international solidarity which is one of the main pillars of the social-democratic ideology.

Since its foundation the M.E.P. has always expressed its will to make all the necessary efforts to establish a democratic regime to be able to guarantee the fundamental principles of the social-democracy.

By this means the M.E.P. would like to state that it will support the classes of our population that defend the fundamental rights and liberties of the individual. This is fully in agreement with the political orientation of a popular party such as ours.

It would be a very serious mistake to mention only countries that have rightist dictatorship such as Chile, Argentina, Bolivia etc.. It is also adequate to state that we are social-democrats and that we strongly condemn both extreme right and extreme left regimes.

That is why we are very happy because we have finally been able to receive acknowledgement and have been recognized as a member of the Council of the Socialist International, because this organization will have to give us the necessary moral support to find the necessary strength to struggle for our common ideology.

That is why brothers and sisters we want to welcome all of you to our island.

We want also to welcome our brother Minister President of the Netherlands Antilles, political leader of the M.A.N. and member of the Council of the International Socialist. And we would also like to welcome all our other fellow members of the party M.A.N., Ben Wilms and all the others who are present in this meeting.

There is another illustrious person that is present here in this Congress and who has caused here in Aruba many political comments. Rightist sectors of our political world, and I am saying rightist to avoid saying fascist, have expressed a great amount of criticism against the MEP because our party, for the first time in the political history of the Netherlands Antilles, has had the courage to declare and state that the political party is independent and that no sector, even though if it has a lot of money and great economic strength can have an influence in the policies of the MEP.

And why do they call this person communist, because he was able to defeat a fascist government in Grenada, the First Minister present here with us, Mr. Maurice Bishop.

And as John Odlum said in the t.v. 'let's give the man a chance. He is only one year in the Government of Grenada. He will come along with the Social Democrats and he will be able to realize the democratic system in Grenada.

Another illustrious brother, who is present here in this Conference is the General Secretary of the prestigious, without leaving aside our other brother from the M.E.P. of Venezuela, the General Secretary of Accion Democratica Jaime Lusinchi.

Unfortunately, due to health problems, a great friend from the Partido Radical de Chile Anselmo Sule has not been able to be present at this Congress. Nevertheless he delegated one of his fellow-members of the party and he was here on March 25, 1977 during the Referendum and he expressed his admiration for the decision made by the Aruban people, Mr. Carlos Morales.

I would like to welcome also Mr. Unison Whiteman, Minister of Grenada. Also Dessima Williams Ambassador to the Organization of American States and Mr. Strong Chief of Protocol.

Welcome to all of you.

We would also like to welcome our brothers from Argentina from the Partido Socialista Unificado, Mr. Simon Lazara.

Our brother from the Partido Socialista Popular from Argentina, Mr. Victor Garcia Costa. The prestigious politician of the Partido Socialista de Chile and a great friend of Aruba Mr. Aniceto Rodriguez and his lovely wife. And another brother from that same party, who is at present in exile Mr. Juan Araya.

I would like to welcome also Mr. Rodrigo Borga from the Izquierda Democratica del Ecuador.

Members of the Democratic Party of Venezuela Accion Democratica Dr. Enrique Tejera Paris. He works in the International Relations of the Party. We also have Dr. Jose Angel Ciliberto, representative of Accion Democratica. And representative Alberto Finol; also of Accion Democratica. And also we would like to welcome Elena Mora, Secretary of Dr. Enrique Tejera Paris, who is a very important element of support for our Secretariat.

From St. Lucia, John Odlum, Minister of Tourism and Sports.

Unfortunately, due to the situation that there is in Santo Domingo (they have a lot of strikes there at present), unfortunately one of our brothers who is deeply appreciated

by all of us and who helped the M.E.P. to be able to be accepted as a member of the Council of the Socialist International has not been able to be here. But the Dominican party is well represented by the former rector of the autonomous university of Santo Domingo, Dr. Hugo Tolentino.

The Mexican party is represented here by the Partido Revolucionario e Institucional Alma Delia Garcia Ramirez. And now we would like to introduce a very important person, the only Senator of the opposition that can be here with us because the reactionary and military forces have killed all of his brothers, our brother Carlos Gallardo of Guatemala.

I have welcomed all the representatives of the M.A.N., I would like to welcome all other brothers of the M.A.N. party.

Our brother from the M.E.P. of Venezuela, Dr. Silva Calderon.

In a short time the application of the M.E.P. to become a member of the permanent committee of Latin American parties will be discussed and this organization is represented here by the Secretary of International Affairs Mr. Sang.

From the island Bonaire, the leader of the majority party Mr. Rudy Ellis of Union Patriotico Boneriano and his fellow-member of the party Mr. Julio Angela. Welcome.

From the only opposition party in Bonaire and a very strong party, the leader of the Democratic Party of Bonaire, Mr. Jopie Abraham and Mr. Monchin Soleana and Mr. Christiaans members of the same party.

From the opposition party in Curacao, of the Christian Democracy, the N.V.P., Mr. Papi Jesurun, General Secretary.

From Hubentud 70 brothers Albert and Godfried.
Mr. Karl Hubner from Nueva Sociedad Caracas.

That is the problem we have when we start mentioning names.

I am going to announce the names of other people who are present. If you allow me, my dear brothers and sisters, I will read now a letter from Hortensia Pucci de Allende.

To the President of MEP, Dear Friend, On to-day on the 9th of March I just received your invitation to the event that will take place between the 18th and the 21st of March to commemorate 10 years of struggle and to analyze important international problems.

Due to commitments that I have in Europe where I will be on

that date, it is not possible for me to accept your invitation unfortunately. I shall find out what has gone on thru some of my Chilean compatriots that will be there. I wish you all success in your debates on these international problems that affect the Caribbean area and Latin-America, such as the problems you have mentioned in your invitation. I would like to congratulate the M.E.P. for its 10th year of activity struggling for the social and political progress of Aruba. Cordial greetings Hortensia Pucci de Allende.

Even though we have a message for the President from Aniceto Rodriguez[†] from Guillermo Cubillos.
Dear Friend, it was a great satisfaction we have to realize the tenth anniversary of the M.E.P. as a political organization, that we are closely linked to thru ties of friendship. On this date we would like to express to you and to the people of Aruba truly and socialist and sincere congratulations for the brilliant job done by your leaders and the militants under the sign of the struggle for Freedom and self-determination. We also know that this date is even much more significant since during 1981 the nation of Aruba will also celebrate the first five years from the date it adopted the national anthem and flag officially, national symbols, which manifest their struggle for decolonialization and liberty. The convocation to international event to commemorate this event will also allow us to give our greetings directly on your motherland accepting the kind invitation that has been given to us. The event will allow us to exchange experiences which will help our people and strengthen the political ties that unite our two peoples. Our common objection to struggle for liberty and independence, international justice and economic development justifies this. Reiterating our wishes for continued success of the sister party M.E.P., please receive the greetings from your friends Guillermo Cubillos and Aniceto Rodriguez.

From our good friend Anselmo Sule, Dear Friend, I am really very sorry not to be able to be present at the events programed by the M.E.P. for its tenth anniversary as a political party in Aruba and for having achieved the membership as a consultative member of the International Socialist at the fifth meeting of the post war, which took place in November past in Madrid. It would have been extremely pleasant for me as President of the Radical Party of Chile and Vice President of the International Socialist to have shared your pleasure that you have achieved thru the struggles and to which we have permanently been supporting, We consider it pertinent to express our congratulations for the subject matter you will be discussing and to congratulate you for the distinguished people you have invited and subjects such as the political situation in Latin America and the Caribbean, decolonialization and independence, human rights and political developments and economic development to the micro-state is

closely tied to the great problems that affect their continent and which must be analyzed dialectally in order to solve them in favor of the great national majorities. Understanding the political capacity of the participants thereto I have worked with many of them often on International events such as Carlos Andres Perez, Daniel Oduber, Michael Manley, Pena Gomez, Ruben Berrillos Aniceto Rodriguez, Guillermo Ingo, Carlos Gallardo and so many others I presume that the presentations and resolutions that will arise therefrom will of course satisfy those who are observing this important event taking place in Aruba. Since we are not able to be with you for reasons that you are fully aware of the subject that I am aware of the political situation in Latin America and the Caribbean will be presented by my friend Carlos Morales, member of our political bureau who furthermore is a professor in the school of sciences of the national university of Mexico. To repeat our congratulations for M.E.P. and for the leaders for having organized such a very important meeting as a new demonstration for the political capacity which will of course benefit your struggle for a free Aruba. Signed Anselmo Sule fraternally.

From the Argentinian Socialist Confederation, Dear Brother, we would like to send to you our fraternal greeting wishing you all success at the international conference of the International Socialist which will take place in Aruba sponsored by the M.E.P. Brother Emilio J. Corbiere, Press Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Argentinian Socialist Confederation will represent our party at that international event. The 3 subjects: decolonialization, self-determination and liberty establish the main principles of the socialists movement and the popular movement of universal latin america. On behalf of the Executive Committee of our party and in particular on behalf of our president, Dr. Alicia Mural, I reiterate my fraternal greetings to you all. Signed by the Secretary General.

We have also received and that is why he is not here present today at the Head table, Ben Carlson, Secretary General of the Socialist International, who will be arriving on Friday, early in the morning and Friday he will start the day with his presentation. To-day we have assigned to the Secretary General, Accion Democratica, Jaime Lusinchí, to give us a speech at this time.

Brothers and sisters, a great friend who has helped us in Oslo and Madrid, a great deal to increase the membership to be allowed to become a consultative member of the Socialist International and of the People's National Party, Mike Manley's Party of Jamaica, our friend Paul Miller.

And next to him Lasana Kwesi of the National Joint Action Committee of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and further Dave Darbeau.

And at this moment from Accion Democrática de Venezuela, Franco de Agostino and Miguel Contreras have just arrived. Welcome! My dear brethren and sisters, I hope you enjoy your stay on our island. I hope you enjoy the hospitality of our people and I hope that this Conference will be extremely fruitful. Your solidarity and support will be for our people the stimulus they need to achieve our liberty in a new society, where democratic principles, human rights, social justice and the solidarity with other people will govern. Only based on these principles can we guarantee the peace and the happiness of our people.

I thank you all.
